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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1. Mideast](#)
- [2. Iran: Nuclear Program](#)
- [3. US-Israel Relations](#)

Key stories in the media:

Leading media cited President Bush's Passover message, which was issued on Wednesday and centered on the notion of freedom.

Major media reported that for the first time since the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, IDF troops entered the Strip openly, in order to examine the place where two armed Palestinians were killed on Wednesday and to ensure that no bombs had been planted there. The two Palestinians had planned to attack either an Israeli community or a military patrol on Wednesday evening. Deputy IDF Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinsky was quoted as saying in an interview bannered by Yediot that if necessary, the IDF might reoccupy the Strip. The media interviewed several other senior officers who advocated strong military actions in the Gaza Strip. Israel Radio and other media reported that at the UN Security Council (UNSC), the US blocked a proposed statement that would have expressed grave concern about the recent escalation of Israeli military operations, especially in the occupied territories. It called on Israel to refrain from excessive use of force that endangers the Palestinian civilian population. Israel Radio said that the UNSC will hold a debate on the situation in the Middle East, which will be open to all UN member states.

In its lead story, Maariv cited an Al Jazeera-TV report broadcast on Thursday that quoted an associate of Palestinian PM Ismail Haniyeh as saying anonymously that Hamas might recognize Israel's existence in exchange for a full withdrawal to the 1967 lines. Maariv reported that in an interview with The Washington Post, Haniyeh warned against the consequences of the American-European decision to freeze economic assistance to the Palestinian government. Haniyeh was quoted as saying that the decision would put at risk American interests in the Arab and Muslim worlds. The Jerusalem Post reported that Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Mashal recently met in Yemen with Sheikh Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, an Al-Qaida representative who is wanted in the US for his involvement in supporting and funding global terror. Yediot reported that Mahdi Akif, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, is expected to release in the near future a religious edict that will allow the Hamas leadership in the territories to recognize Israel. Yediot cited "secret" information that reached Jerusalem, according to which senior Egyptian officials initiated Akif's move.

The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that today, Palestinian FM Mahmoud Zahar will begin a five-day fundraising trip to Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia,

Bahrain, and Kuwait.

Ha'aretz (Hebrew Ed.) bannered a comment made on Thursday by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: "Our situation has changed completely. We are a nuclear country and speak to others from [that] position." Major media reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged members of the UNSC to take action on the issue of Iranian uranium enrichment, though she did not specifically ask them to impose sanctions on Tehran or to change the previously-set timetable that gave it 30 days to respond to the demands of the international community. Yediot reported that a spy satellite that Israel intends to launch next month is already at its launching site in Russia. The newspaper wrote that the "Adom-B" (Red-B) satellite will improve the Israeli defense establishment's monitoring capability of the Iranian threat. Yediot also reported that Arrow missile batteries have been upgraded so that they are able to intercept long-range Iranian missiles. Yediot reported that IAF Commander Maj. Gen. Eliezer Shkedy has named Lt. Col. Ran Kochav as the new commander of the Arrow unit.

All media reported that the body of Muhammad Abu al-Hawa, from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of A-Tur, was found in his burned-out car in Jericho on Thursday morning. The media cited the police's belief that the murder was motivated by al-Hawa's recent sale of a four-story apartment building to Jews. Israel Radio reported that the police are investigating whether the PA was involved in the murder.

Israel Radio and other media reported that the US administration extended a six-month waiver of restrictions on the PLO's Washington office, saying it remained a useful channel for ties with Palestinian Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas. Israel Radio noted that the office formally belongs to the Hamas-led PA government.

Maariv reported that in a letter to Interim PM Ehud Olmert, the jailed convicted spy Jonathan Pollard threatened to divulge sensitive information about the Gil Pensioners' Party's leader Rafi Eitan -- who was Pollard's control officer -- if Eitan is appointed minister in the new Israeli government. Ha'aretz reported that the Committee to Free Jonathan Pollard asked Olmert and the leaders of other Knesset parties on the eve of Passover to submit an additional formal request asking the USG to grant the jailed convicted spy clemency.

Ha'aretz reported that in a statement released Thursday, Hamas intimated that the office of PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas, "along with familiar symbols of the previous PA," is emptying the coffers of the new Palestinian government.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post printed an AP story that Al-Qaida deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri said in a video, dated with the Islamic month corresponding to November 2005, that the elimination of Israel is the duty of every believer.

Yediot quoted Romano Prodi, the apparent winner of the Italian elections, as saying that he will act to make the EU change its position vis-a-vis the new Palestinian government, and that he shows interest about the openness that Hamas is demonstrating.

Ha'aretz reported that Indonesian FM Nur Hassan Wirajuda denied on Wednesday that two Israeli diplomats met with senior Indonesian government officials in Jakarta on Tuesday, for the first time in six years. The Jerusalem Post quoted Ambassador Jim Jeffrey, the senior adviser to Secretary Rice on Iraq, as saying this week that a decline in the number of insurgents entering Iraq through the Syrian border can be attributed partly to the Syrian decision to impose a visa regime that limits the ability of foreign fighters to enter Iraq, which Jeffrey said "is something that we pressed them to do."

Yediot devoted the cover story of its weekly news supplement to the expected contest between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and US Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton in the 2008 presidential race.

Ha'aretz reported that last week in San Remo, Italy, IDF officers took first place in a competition on international and humanitarian law.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel may soon be included on the blacklist of countries allowing human trafficking

for purposes of servitude -- through employment of laborers from developing countries.

Israel Radio reported that the American pop singer Madonna is considering performing in Israel.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior editor Rafi Mann wrote in an editorial of popular, pluralist Maariv: "Israel must free itself from the fetters of President Bush's Roadmap, which allows Israel to sit apathetically as long as the PA doesn't act against terror."

Columnist Doron Rosenblum wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "[Defense Minister Shaul] Mofaz lists the threats, terror warnings and dangers like they were his achievements, as though the solutions he is offering -- more and more escalation, crushing and killing -- are not among the very acts that brought us to this situation."

Block Quotes:

I. "A Double-Edged Sword"

Senior editor Rafi Mann wrote in an editorial of popular, pluralist Maariv (April 14): "When will Israel, according to international law and in the eyes of the entire world, cease to be an occupying power? Only when it allows the Palestinian Authority to function and negotiates with it. This is true regarding the improvement of economic conditions in the Gaza Strip, and by and large true regarding the chances of defeating internal anarchy in Gaza and reducing Qassam rocket fire. For this purpose, Israel must free itself from the fetters of President Bush's Roadmap, which allows Israel to sit apathetically as long as the PA doesn't act against terror. Dov Weisglass defined this with unconcealed satisfaction in an October 2004 interview with Ha'aretz: The disengagement plan was akin to 'formaldehyde' that would freeze for many years President Bush's plan -- 'two states for two nations.' The problem is that formaldehyde is a dangerous chemical that could cause burns and other trouble to the people using it. The boycott imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people's elected government is a double-edge sword, too: The chances of it bringing forth usefulness are doubtful, but we'll soon see the damage it has produced. We'll eventually talk to Hamas; but, as usual, it'll be too late and after we pay a hefty and pointless price."

II. "The Future Is Not Mofaz"

Columnist Doron Rosenblum wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz (April 14): "The separation of Ariel Sharon from the title 'prime minister' brings to an end the long vacation from political life as we knew it that Israel has been on since 2000. The five years of Prime Minister Sharon were indeed packed with action and misdeeds, blood, victims and political intrigue, way beyond the regular dosage. They were a time of a weird, hyper-realistic and somewhat smug atmosphere. One could even call it post-political. One man ... filled the whole stage, while our entire political life, regardless of party, took a seat in the gallery.... Confusion and disarray are everywhere, except in the one department and one player where shame and reassessment should be paramount -- the security policy and the defense minister who led it. Five years of all-out war against Hamas ended with Hamas in power, and this actually surprised the intelligence service. Likewise, the vow 'to sear Palestinian consciousness' ended just where it began -- with dozens of terrorist alerts. Thus, one might expect a modicum of hesitation and humility from this quarter during the change of government.... Mofaz lists the threats, terror warnings and dangers like they were his achievements, as though the solutions he is offering -- more and more escalation, crushing and killing -- are not among the very acts that brought us to this situation."

12. Iran: Nuclear Program:

Summary:

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Israel ... finds itself in an awkward position.... It is now careful not to be seen as the one pushing for an aggressive approach which might derail the diplomatic process."

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "This week Tehran threw down the gauntlet.... The moment has arrived for President George W. Bush to make clear if he is, in the final analysis, the leader of the free world or its undertaker."

Block Quotes:

I. "In Denial?"

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (April 14): "Israel ... finds itself in an awkward position. Though, for the past decade, the main voice calling for international attention to the Iranian nuclear issue, it is now careful not to be seen as the one pushing for an aggressive approach which might derail the diplomatic process. Israeli officials rejected claims made in the New Yorker article that Israel was pressing the American administration to take military steps against Iran's nuclear sites, and stressed that what Israel would like to see now is a completion of the diplomatic process that should lead to the end of the Iranian project.... An interesting result of this week's rumor-mill is that after the dust settles -- and when all the official spokespeople are done denying military plans against Iran -- one thing that can be said that wasn't state outright before: The US can attack Iran."

II. "The Fateful Hour Has Arrived"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post (April 14): "By seeking Security Council action on Iran, the US has delegated the power for contending with the Iranian nuclear threat to China and Russia which have both assisted Iran in developing its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Like its policy towards North Korea, the United States' policy toward Iran serves not to thwart Tehran's nuclear aspirations but to facilitate them. It serves not to expand America's options for contending with this grave and gathering threat to its national security and global interests, but to limit them.... America is the greatest nation on Earth and it does have the ability to defend the world against regimes like Iran and its allies.... But America cannot, and it will not accomplish any of these goals if it continues to abide by strategies and frameworks that serve only to strengthen its enemies and permit its 'allies' to behave perfidiously.... This week Tehran threw down the gauntlet. The greatest battle of this war -- the battle to prevent the world's most dangerous regime from attaining the most dangerous weapons known to man -- has begun. The moment has arrived for President George W. Bush to make clear if he is, in the final analysis, the leader of the free world or its undertaker."

3. US-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "Israel has nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to what it has to offer America, especially when compared to its Arab neighbors.... Olmert should think about this, and not only about the list of handouts he'll ask for from Bush, when he goes to America next month."

Block Quotes:

"Enough Handouts"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz (April 14): "America's friendship is Israel's most important political asset. The Jewish state's security and prosperity, and maybe even its survival, depend on American support. The

problem is that the relationship between the two countries is based on a narrow foundation. Nobody has any doubt that George Bush is sympathetic to Israel but he won't serve forever, his popularity is in free fall and America is not only run from the White House. That's the view prevalent among those in the Israeli establishment who deal with ties to the US.... Now Ehud Olmert wants to outdo his master [Ariel Sharon] and go to Washington with a ravenous 'shipping basket': recognition of the separation fence as a permanent border, economic support, improved strategic relations with the US, [and] defense against Iran. Common to all those ideas, are that they continue the tradition of 'gimme, gimme,' toward America. More aid, more weapons, another letter from the president. The Israeli establishment is completely petrified into that 'gimme' tradition and doesn't stop to ask what the Americans get out of it.... Israel has nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to what it has to offer America, especially when compared to its Arab neighbors. And it will benefit from the closer ties to the most developed economy and educational system in the world. Olmert should think about this, and not only about the list of handouts he'll ask for from Bush, when he goes to America next month."

JONES